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Fig. 9. Terrace street, Aztec style.

Though the village contains 662 house sites, it does not have the compact or crowded appearance of some Mexican towns. For the most part, the houses are separated from each other by gardens, patios, corrals, and sometimes milpas. These are enclosed by low-lying stone walls which do not block the view from the street and which permit overhanging trees to shade the street. Only a few houses in the center are built contiguously in Spanish style and are enclosed by high, concealing walls.

Tepoztlán has the traditional square plaza around which are grouped the more important public buildings. On one side of the plaza is the small public park, complete with bandstand, shade trees, benches, and brick walks. The paved road, which runs along the other side of the park, ends at this point, and here, too, is the last stop on the bus line.

North of the park is the courthouse which houses the office of the president, secretary, and other local officials. A guard in soldier's uniform is frequently seen pacing up and down before the steps. The new school house was built next to the courthouse and is now one of the important edifices of the center. Between these two buildings and the plaza itself is the Portales, a semi-enclosed street where most of the stores and permanent vending places are located. The street has a roof supported by columns and provides merchants and buyers protection from the sun and rain.

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Fig. 10. A street, resembling a dried-out stream bed.

rain. To the east is the large cathedral and convent, the most imposing and handsome buildings in the village. The convent is now a historical monument and is visited by tourists. Between the cathedral and the plaza is a row of whitewashed, flat-roofed stores. West of the plaza is a dirt road leading to the lower part of the village, to the cemetery, and to the village of Ixcatepec and more stores. The mills and some of the finer old houses of former *caciques* are also located on the plaza.

This part of the village presents the appearance and some of the hustle and bustle of a town, but the streets off the center are uniformly quiet and rustic and stamp Tepoztlán as a rural village. (See Fig. 12.) But even the center does not give the impression of an active, thriving community. The park, plaza, and public buildings show evidence of chronic neglect. Only for the annual Carnaval is the area well swept and the main fountain cleaned. The park is seldom occupied by the native population and, except when there are tourists, usually looks abandoned.

The stores are small and dark and have unattractive displays. On market days the few vendors and the small variety of goods available betray little commercial activity and a general air of decline. (See Fig. 13.)

The streets just off the plaza bear names indicated by placards. As is customary in Mexico the street names commemorate important historical events and outstanding local figures. Thus in Tepoztlán we find such street names as The Fifth of May, Aniceto Villamar, and No Reelección.[8] Only those houses in the center are

[8] Some of the street names are in Náhuatl and refer to pre-Hispanic figures, for example, Avenida del Tepozteco and Netzahualcoyotl.

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males, refused to work side by side, and each organized separate shifts, one beginning at Tepoztlán and working toward Cuernavaca, the other working from Cuernavaca toward Tepoztlán.

Although the village *cuatequitl* is intended as a means of aiding the village as a whole, there are many obstacles to its successful operation, and it is gradually declining. Perhaps the fundamental difficulty is the inherent individualism of Tepoztecans, the suspiciousness and critical attitude toward the local government, and the paucity of local funds. The village *cuatequitl* has been traditionally associated in the minds of the villagers as a coercive rather than a voluntary institution. This may

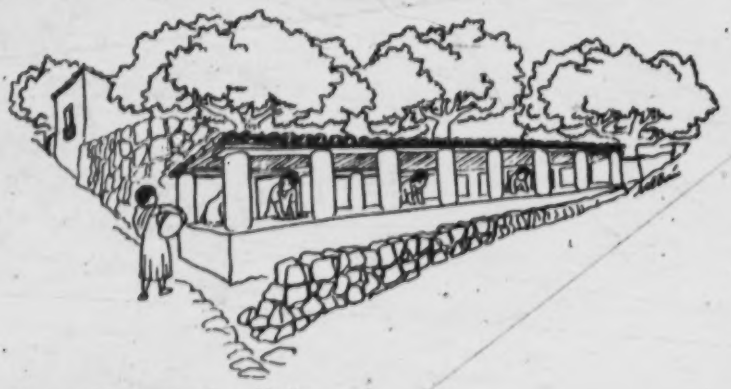

Fig. 20. The communal washbasins.

be the result of having lived under an authoritarian system in which the local government had been imposed for years. Since the local government, generally the *síndico* or the president, has the power to designate the citizens who are to work in the *cuatequitl*, there is ample opportunity for favoritism and vengeance against political opponents or personal enemies.

It may be significant in this connection that children in their games will often say, "Unless you do this I will give you your *cuatequitl*," suggesting that the *cuatequitl* is viewed as a punishment. It should also be noted that historically the existence of a native institution for collective labor was a distinct aid to the Spanish conquerors in their organization and control of the labor supply.

The second type of *cuatequitl* is the barrio *cuatequitl*. This is the collective working of the lands of the barrio saints. Barrio members are expected to cooperate in the preparation of the land, planting, cultivating, and harvesting of the crops from the saints' field. The sale of the produce goes for the upkeep of the local chapel. In contrast to the village *cuatequitl*, participation in the barrio *cuatequitl* is entirely voluntary. The barrio *mayordomo* goes through the barrio announcing at each house the time of the *cuatequitl*. While there are no fines or penalties for non-